

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 TRSE-00 EB-08 ARA-10
MCT-01 HA-05 /128 W
-----112141 131504Z /40

R 120735Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8735
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3953

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, SY, PDRY
SUBJ: SYRIAN REACTION TO COUP IN PDRY

1 SARG HAS NOT REACTED OFFICIALLY TO ARAB LEAGUE CALL FOR
BOYCOTT AGAINST PDRY. MFA OFFICIALS PRIVATELY DENIED REPORT
FROM SAUDI ARABIA THAT SARG SUPPORTED BOYCOTT BUT SAID THEY
WOULD NOT MAKE DENIAL PUBLIC IN HOPES THAT
THE WHOLE THING WOULD BLOW OVER. SYRIA CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN
RELATIONS WITH PDRY THROUGH ITS AMBASSADOR IN NORTH YEMEN.
FACT IS, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO MFA DIVISION DIRECTOR SIAGE,
SYRIA HAS PRACTICALLY NO DEALINGS WITH PDRY ANYWAY. HE
SAID SADAT INITIATIVE HAD CREATED STRANGE BEDFELLOWS IN
RESISTANCE FRONT AND STRONGEST OF ALL, EVER BEFORE COUP,
WAS PDRY. SYRIA IS SYMPATHETIC TO SAUDI
VIEW OF PDRY. NEVERTHELESS, SARG PREFERS TO
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SEE DIFFERENCES IN ARAB WORLD RESOLVED THROUGH
NEGOTIATIONS RATHER THAN BOYCOTTS OR HOSTILITIES.

2. FONMIN KHADDAM'S INTERPRETER ABU FARES SAID THAT
SYRIA SAW NO EVIDENCE OF SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN PDRY
COUP ALTHOUGH MERE PRESENCE OF SOVIET AND CUBAN ADVISORS
UNDOUBTEDLY HELP LEAD ABD AL-FATAH ISMAEL TO STAGE

COUP. ABU FARES SAID THAT ONE RESULT OF AFGHANISTAN AND PDY COUPS HAS BEEN TO MAKE SOVIETS TEND SOFTER IN ARAB WORLD FOR FEAR OF ESCALATING ARAB REACTIONS ALONG LINES OF IRAQI MOVES AGAINST COMMUNISTS. SYRIA NOTICED THIS NEW SOVIET SENSITIVITY IN RELATION TO ERITREAN PROBLEM. AFRICAN DIVISION DIRECTOR MOHAMAD AL-TALL AGREED, NOTING THAT CUBANS HAVE STAYED OUT OF ETHIOPIAN ATTACKS ON ERITREANS. HE CLAIMED SOVIETS ARE PUSHING FOR NEGOTIATED AUTONOMY FOR ERITREANS, BUT THAT NEITHER SIDE IN CONFLICT IS YET WILLING TO ACCEPT THIS APPROACH.

3. COMMENT: SARG IS CLEARLY TRYING TO STRADDLE THE FENCE ON PDY. IT HAS NO GREAT LOVE FOR PDY AND IF PUSH COMES TO SHOVE WOULD PROBABLY BACK SAUDIS. NEVERTHELESS, IF THEY CAN GET AWAY WITH IT, SYRIANS HOPE TO EVADE ISSUE ENTIRELY TO KEEP UP THE TATTERED REMNANTS OF THE STEADFASTNESS FRONT.
PELLETREAU

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